The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20010303224648/http://communitypresbyterian.com:80/22000.htm

# How the World Misunderstands Christianity

**Mark 2:1-12**

Thomas Michael Smith
CPC 2-20-00

BACK TO MAIN SERMON PAGE

**How many of you have ever heard of Gavrilo Princip? Here's a guy who played a starring role in the 20th century. He's the person who triggered up an international shooting match which eventually cost millions and millions of dollars, whose one action in a split second of time altered the course of world history. Do you remember Gavrilo Princip?**

**Princip is the 19-year-old Serbian student who assassinated Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914. This ignited World War I, which resulted in the Treaty of Versailles, which further plunged Germany into an economic depression, and deeply embittered a nondescript Austrian corporal named Adolph Hitler. As we know, Hitler was responsible for creating the great horror of World War II, a war which divided Eastern Europe without regard to traditional borders, ethnicity, language or religion (the proximate cause of much of the trouble in the Balkans these days); WWII hastened the research and development of atomic weapons (leading to great scientific progress and the horror of using a nuclear device), and WWII resulted in the creation of the state of Israel.**

**One man. One moment. One BIG mistake. A minor villain whose one bullet made a terrible difference. Yet, the good news is that it works the other way round too. Think of the nameless student in Tiananmen Square who squared off with the army tank. Or Englishwoman Emmeline Pankhurst, whose suffragettes fought for the women's vote at the turn of the last century. And there are others whose names we have forgotten or whose names we never knew, whose kindnesses and heroisms changed our lives.**

**These other heroes are here in this story of the paralytic in Mark 2. These friends who were told, at the door, that Dr. Jesus was busy with a crowd of people already. I want us to think about these people for a moment, think about what they represent.**

**Their imagination is amazing.. Perhaps that's a synonym for the word *faith*. Jesus brings the kingdom of God among us, working signs and wonders, and we say, as one, 'We have never seen anything like this!' And that's tough because everybody tries to make sense of the world based on past experience. Yet Jesus brings us new experience, experience outside the conventional means of making sense of the world.**

**I have to say that most non-Christians I have known or have met believe that Christians are people with a limited worldview. People outside of Christ believe that Christians are those whose vision is limited to the confines of what the church believes, people whose brains have been unduly constrained by their religious tradition. Today I want to suggest otherwise. Today I want to say that Christians are those who have literally had their minds blown, expanded in order to take account of this One who shatters our notions of what can be and what cannot be, this One whose presence transforms our little world into an**

**outbreak of the kingdom of God. The ability *to see* this kingdom of God and *to live life with it in mind* is what we Christians mean when we use the word 'faith.'**

**People are so odd. They think that modern knowledge equates to ageless wisdom. People think that there's nothing more you can do because the science of it has run its course and there aren't any more answers. So people today resign themselves to the closedness of a situation because they can't imagine anything other than their situation. And they do that because they lack the imagination to project themselves out beyond the boundaries of the present, into a new world not of our own modern creation.**

**The sick man's friends discovered they could expect more, because they had heard of this Jesus who offered more, so they let their imagination go, and decided to seek after something new. They reached out to God just as God has reached out to us. That is faith, the ability to imagine something more. And their actions with their friend become for us a parable of faith. We can learn from them, from this story.**

**We share with our non-Christian friends a yearning to be close to God. Yes, even our non-Christian friends yearn for Jesus, though they don't often know it as a God-yearning. Of course, some have anesthetized themselves with hobbies and addictions and family, but there are many, far more than you might think, who are looking for God, even as they talk about how small minded we Christians must be to believe this or that.**

**The problem with the world is that it lacks imagination. It lacks faith. It can't pray because it isn't willing to acknowledge that there's someone who can answer prayer. But there is. And those who are Christians follow that Someone, Jesus of Nazareth, fully God, fully man. In Christ, the kingdom of God came to earth. In Christ, imagination became faith, and because of this new-ness, this mind blowing transformation, possibilities emerged that were not there before. This is what was on the minds of the friends of the man on the mat, those whose imagination and faith led them not to accept the notion that they got to the Jesus party too late because there was no room in the doorway. The in-breaking of the kingdom of God caused some people, who a week before were resigned to simply visiting their paralyzed friend, to do whatever they could to let light shine into the darkness of disease.**

**No, we aren't the ones with the limited worldviews. The people who are at home this morning, whose life is limited by work and hobby and small imagination, these are the people for whom we must pray, that God would shine His light in their direction too. As for us, we Christians who come here to worship Jesus, we and our houses will serve the Lord!**

BACK TO MAIN SERMON PAGE

Copyright © 2000 Community Presbyterian Church, Vacaville, All rights reserved.

Castles INFORMATION NETWORK